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SOME OLD LETTERS

The first letter published below was written by Dr. John Marsh, a native of Massachusetts, the first American physician to locate in Los Angeles. Dr. Marsh was a graduate of Harvard College and also of its medical school. He came to California in 1835 from Santa Fé, where he had lived several years. He petitioned the Ayuntamiento to be allowed to practice medicine. He was given permission. The proceedings of the Illustrious Ayuntamiento for February 25, 1836, read: "The Illustrious Body decided to give Juan Marchet (Marsh) permission to practice medicine, as he has submitted for inspection his diploma, which was found to be correct; and also for the reason that he would be very useful to the community."

He entered upon the practice of his profession, but as money was an almost unknown quantity in the old pueblo, he had to take his fees in horses, cattle and hides, a currency exceedingly inconvenient to carry around. So early in 1837 he abandoned the practice of medicine, quitted Los Angeles and went up north to find a cattle range. Yerba Buena, now San Francisco, at the time the letter was written contained two houses. He located on the Rancho Los Médanos, near Monte Diablo, where he lived until he was murdered by a Mexican in 1856. A letter written by him descriptive of California, and published in a Missouri paper in 1840, was instrumental in causing the organization in the spring of 1841 of the first immigrant train that crossed the plains to California.

J. M. GUINN.

YERBA BUENA, March 27, 1837.

Dear Sir:—I have been wandering about the country for several weeks and gradually becoming acquainted both with it and its inhabitants. This is the best part of the country, as you very well know, and is in fact the only part that is at all adapted to agriculturists from our country. Nothing more is wanted but just and equal laws and a government—yes, any government that can be permanent and combine the confidence and good will of those who think. I have good hope, but not unmixed with doubt and apprehension. News has just arrived that an army from Sonora is on its march for the conquest and plunder of California. Its force is variously stated from two to 600 men. This, of course, keeps everything in a foment.

I have had a choice of two districts of land offered to me, and in a few days I shall take one or the other. A brig of the H. B. Co. (Hudson Bay Co.) is here from the Columbia with Capt. Young (who has come to buy cattle) and other gentlemen of the company. I have been at the head waters of the Sacramento and met with near a hundred people from the Columbia; in fact, they and the people here regard each other as neighbors. Indeed, a kinder spirit exists here and less of prejudice and distrust to foreigners than in the purlieu of the City of Angels.

It is my intention to undergo the ceremony of baptism in a few days, and shall shortly need the certificate of my application for letters of naturalization. My application was made to the Most Illustrious Council of the City of Angeles, I think in the month of January last year (1836). I wish you would do me the favor to obtain a certificate in the requisite form and direct it to me at Monterey to the care of Mr. Spence. Mr. Spear is about to remove to this place. Capt. Steele's ship has been damaged and is undergoing repairs which will soon be completed. His barque is also here. I expect to be in the Angelic City some time in May.

Please give my respects to Messrs. Warner and William M. Prior and all "enquiring friends."

Very respectfully,

Your ob't. servant,

JOHN MARSH.

A. Stearns, Esq., Angeles.

LOS ANGELES, September 29, 1849.

To His Excellency, B. Riley, Brig.-Gen., U. S. A., Governor of California, Monterey—

Sir:—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your appointment of myself as Prefect of the District of Los Angeles, dated Sept. 1, 1849. While thankful for confidence reposed in me, I trust my poor services may prove acceptable to all concerned.

As Prefect of said District of Los Angeles I beg leave to state that this district is particularly exposed to the depredations of Indian horse thieves—and other evil disposed persons, and at present the inhabitants are badly armed and powder cannot be obtained at any price. Under these circumstances I would respectfully request that you place at my disposal for the defense of the lives and property of the citizens of said district, subject

tò such conditions as you may deem proper, the following arms and ammunition, viz.:

One hundred flint lock muskets with corresponding accoutrements; ten thousand flint lock ball and buckshot cartridges; five hundred musket flints.

Respectfully your ob't, serv't.,

STEPHEN C. FOSTER,
Prefect, Los Angeles.